

**Wellesley Public Schools**  
**Department of Nursing Services**

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**HEAD LICE INFORMATION**

**General Information:**

- Head Lice (Pediculosis capitis) infestation is common among children ages 3–12 years.
- Head lice are not dangerous. They do not transmit disease.
- Head lice move by crawling and cannot jump or fly.
- Head lice are mostly spread by direct head-to-head contact.
- Head lice transmission can occur at home, school or in the community

**What are Head Lice?**

- Head Lice are tiny, wingless insects that live close to the human scalp
- Head lice feed on human blood.
- An adult louse is the size of a sesame seed.
- Baby lice, or nymphs, are even smaller.
- Nits are the tiny, teardrop-shaped lice eggs.
- Nits attach to the hair shaft, often found at the nape of the neck or behind the ears.
- Nits can look like dandruff but cannot be easily removed or brushed off.

**Prevention:**

- Be aware of the signs and symptoms such as:
  - a) tickling feeling on the scalp or in the hair
  - b) itching caused by the bites of the louse
  - c) irritability and difficulty sleeping – lice are more active in the dark
  - d) sores on the head – caused by scratching
- Check you child’s head at least once a week.
- Avoid sharing personal items that are in close contact with the head such as combs, brushes, helmets, hair accessories, pillows.
- Avoid head to head contact.

**Treatment:**

- Follow the advice of the school nurse.
- Contact your pediatrician for treatment recommendations.
- Follow directions very carefully and read all the warning labels.
- Be aware that over-the-counter products do not kill 100% of the lice and nits.
- Combing and manual removal of lice are essential components to successfully removing ALL nits and lice from the head. This may take over several days to accomplish.
- Check all other members of the household. Only those with live lice or nits close to the scalp should be treated.
- Do not reapply treatment more frequently than recommended.
- Be aware that there are many websites that offer advice and products regarding head lice management. The student's pediatrician and school nurse are the best resources for information regarding head lice management.
- Stay in communication with your school nurse throughout the process.
- The school nurse must assess the student after treatment. Guidance and further direction by the school nurse will help with successful eradication of the head lice infestation.

**Environmental Issues:**

- Machine wash in hot water and regular detergent all clothing and bed lines that have been in contact with the infected person or dry on the hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.
- Items not washable such as toys, pillows etc. should be stored in a tightly sealed plastic bag for two weeks.
- Vacuum carpets, floors, upholstered furniture and the car.
- Soak combs and brushes in hot water for 20 minutes or replace them.
- Notify anyone with whom your child has been in close contact with so that they can monitor for evidence of head lice.

**Resources:**

National Association of School Nurses

[www.nasn.org](http://www.nasn.org)

American Academy of Pediatrics

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/110/3/638.full.pdf>

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

<http://www.state.ma.us/dph/>

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